

**Testimony of Erica Augustine-Mullins, Prevention Coordinator, MCSAAC
Concerning Restoration of RAC Funding
Appropriations Subcommittee on Health**

Good evening, Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter, and Honorable Members of the Public Health Committee:

My name is Erica Augustine-Mullins and I am from the city of Middletown. As Prevention Coordinator for MCSAAC, the Middlesex County Substance Action Council, I am asking you to restore funding for the Regional Action Councils of Connecticut. Our agencies' prevention initiatives have been successful for nearly 25 years. We have educated teachers, parents, youth and young adults on the dangers of substance abuse, binge drinking, and the misuse of prescription drugs. Without your support, our agencies could not have organized seminars, workshops and forums that help keep the children and young adults in our community drug free.

In January 2016, for example, MCSAAC teamed up with Rushford/Hartford Healthcare to organize a Community Opiate Forum which was standing room only. There are eight public opiate forums happening in Middlesex County alone, and other Regional Action Councils are holding similar ones around the state. The forums and the media coverage they generated have raised awareness of substance abuse in Connecticut. They forums generated new ideas and new collaborations to tackle the opiate problem.

Every year, Connecticut loses hundreds of people – most of them young people – to cocaine and opiate overdoses. Thousands more are addicted and still more are in recovery. There is doctor shopping, pill peddling, heroin sales and the theft and diversion of narcotics that have brought a flood of opiates into our region, according to MCSAAC research.

For this reason alone, for the last ten years I, Erica Augustine-Mullins, a Middletown community business owner, have devoted my time voluntarily to the board of MCSAAC. As a volunteer I organized marijuana and tobacco workshops for elementary and middle schools, was a guest speaker for prevention of underage drinking at Middletown Adult Education, participated in the production of a very successful campaign against social hosting – all to help prevent our youth from using or becoming addicted to these deadly substances.

Today I am a professional Prevention Coordinator for MCSAAC and able to give even more time to this work. With my fellow RAC colleagues, we are giving our full attention to preventing addictive substances from destroying our children and our communities as a whole. Our agencies want our children to live drug free and not DIE!

In closing, I want to state my belief that no family can say "I have not been affected by one or more of these substances." We cannot express strongly enough the need for State support to keep the Regional Action Councils working with our schools, businesses, churches, and parents to prevent and reduce substance abuse in the state of Connecticut.

Thank you very much for your attention.

